

This is what they are going to sneak through in 8 days. And now they are trying to cover their fannies.

PROTECTING AND PRESERVING MEDICARE

(Mr. TIAHRT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TIAHRT. Mr. Speaker, last spring when the President's Medicare Trustees Board released their report on the impending bankruptcy of the Medicare system, there was and still is stone-cold silence on the other side of the aisle. No ideas, only criticism. In fact, even their buddies in the elite liberal media noticed the startling conclusions reached by the Medicare trustees. They concluded that unless we take serious steps right now to save Medicare, it will go bankrupt in 7 years.

Republicans have not dodged this issue. We have already started to take serious action to protect and preserve Medicare, not only for today's seniors, but for future generations. We will not allow Medicare to become a bargaining chip in the same old Washington shell game.

Mr. Speaker, this is not about pitting one generation against another or one party against another. It is about generational equity. We must start now to protect Medicare. The consequences for doing nothing and just criticizing are too expensive to ignore.

MEDICARE CUTS BEING FINANCED BY TAX CUTS FOR WEALTHY

(Mr. DE LA GARZA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DE LA GARZA. Mr. Speaker, this morning we've gathered to talk about the Medicare Program—it's health and its future, and specifically impending cuts. In recent weeks we've heard a lot of facts and figures, and we'll hear even more in the weeks to come as we proceed with our work. As we do, however, I think what we have to keep first and foremost in mind is that we're not talking just about numbers, or charts, or abstract concepts. What we're talking about is the Nation's seniors and their health and health care. I regard this to be among the most important issues we will address in this Congress.

Medicare is a program that is approaching its 30th anniversary. It is a program that has resulted in virtually universal coverage for the elderly. When I say this, I am referring to the fact that 99.1 percent of Americans over age 65 have health insurance coverage. There was a time when that wasn't the case, and that time was not all that long ago.

As we proceed with this debate, I think we all recognize and concur on both sides that there are many areas where we should look to make im-

provements. The task before us is how do we accomplish this goal in the most effective way.

One way is to reduce fraud and abuse. Every year millions of dollars are lost to health care fraud. That is why I am so pleased to see that the Department of Health and Human Services has formed a national hotline to report health care fraud involving the Medicare and Medicaid Programs. This tough new antifraud initiative is known as Operation Restore Trust. Its toll-free number is 1-800-HHS-TIPS [1-800-447-8477]. This is certainly a very strong weapon to fight health care fraud. However, it is an effort that will not be successful unless individuals participate in this fight. I encourage all citizens to help.

Now with specific regard to cuts we have heard our majority colleagues say they want to cut \$270 billion out of Medicare. What I find difficult to fathom is that the beneficiaries of these cuts will be those who are quite affluent and who do not need this type relief. Based on the current plans we have seen to overhaul Medicare, approximately 37 million beneficiaries will have their Medicare benefits cut.

The facts are as follows:

Those who get a tax break are the wealthiest 13 percent of seniors;

Those who pay for the tax break are the poorest 22 percent of seniors;

The average interest income of those who receive the tax break exceeds the total income of those who don't;

And over 4 million seniors of modest means will see a dramatic increase in their out-of-pocket costs.

This, to me, is grossly wrong. We should not cut benefits to one group that is so in need just to give a tax break to another. That is something I cannot condone nor can I support.

What we need to do is work to correct the program. We need to see that it works better and more efficiently—that it is a more streamlined and economic program. We must ensure America's seniors that Medicare will be around for the next 30 years. That must be the goal toward which we work. It certainly is mine.

RESTORING FAITH OF AMERICAN PEOPLE IN CONGRESS

(Mrs. SEASTRAND asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. SEASTRAND. Mr. Speaker, in this Congress promises made are promises kept. On the opening day of this Congress, we promised the American people that we would allow an outside, independent firm to audit the books of the House. This is something that had never been done before.

Now that the findings of this audit are seeing the light of day, we can see how very right we were in calling for an audit. It appears that in the previous Congress, the ledgers used to keep track of a \$700 million budget

were hand written. Let me repeat that. Hand written ledgers were used to keep track of a \$700 million budget.

Can anyone imagine a multi-million-dollar operation in the 1990's using hand-written ledgers? It is beyond baffling.

At first glance, one might say that this audit only confirms the worst suspicions about Congress. I disagree, this audit proves that elected officials can come to Washington to expose the truth. This audit proves that the Republican majority is helping to restore the faith of the American people.

REPUBLICAN MEDICARE CUTS AFFECT US ALL

(Mr. BENTSEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BENTSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to the devastating Medicare cuts proposed in the Republican budget plan. The Republican plan reduces patient choice and cuts clinical research.

These cuts certainly will mean higher out-of-pocket expenses and reduced choice of doctors for our Nation's senior citizens.

But seniors won't be the only people affected. These cuts will reduce the quality and availability of health care for all Americans by cutting payments for medical education and clinical research.

These Republican cuts will harm some of our Nation's finest teaching hospitals, such as the University of Texas Health Sciences Center and Baylor College of Medicine in my district. The Association of American Medical Colleges estimates that these cuts will reduce payments for medical education by \$2.4 billion per year. The University of Texas system estimates it will lose \$21 million in Indirect Medical Education payments, and Baylor College of Medicine estimates it would lose \$15 million in such payments. These cuts will affect not just seniors but veterans as well since Baylor provides care to the VA Hospital in Houston.

Without sufficient funding, teaching hospitals will have to reduce the number of residents trained and the training offered. Such actions would reduce care for all Americans and kill our investment in quality health care.

Teaching hospitals also provide cutting-edge care for some of our Nation's sickest patients through their trauma centers, burn centers, cancer treatment centers, and other highly specialized facilities not available anywhere else. The proposed cuts will reduce access to these life-saving facilities.

These Medicare cuts are bad for seniors and bad for everyone else as well.

REPUBLICANS PLAN TO SAVE MEDICARE

(Mr. GANSKE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1